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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: T-MINUS 170 DAYS--STATUS REPORT ON GUYANA'S
PREPAREDNESS FOR CRICKET WORLD CUP 2007

REF: GEORGETOWN 562

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DAVID M. ROBINSON FOR REASON 1.4(B)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: With just 170 days left until the scheduled opening of Cricket World Cup 2007, Guyana appears unprepared to host this major sporting event. A CARICOM review of Guyana's security arrangements has concluded that Guyana "has no plan" and appears to be "overwhelmed by the magnitude" of the event. Lack of accommodation, inadequate disaster preparedness and contingency planning, and poor transportation arrangements are also major areas of concern. Amidst speculation that Guyana may lose the games to another Caribbean venue, the political stakes remain high both in Guyana and within CARICOM. END SUMMARY.

Venue and Potential Attendance

12. (U) Guyana is currently a venue for the "Super 8" quarterfinal matches from March 27 to April 9, 2007. While the teams that will ultimately play in Guyana are uncertain, the tournament brackets will most likely bring England, South Africa, Sri Lanka, India, New Zealand, Australia, Pakistan and the West Indies cricket teams. The British consulting firm Sinclair, Knight, Merz has estimated that as many as 37,000 spectators will ultimately come to Guyana for the games, while Local Organizing Committee (LOC) officials are preparing to handle up to 12,000 visitors at any given time.

13. (U) Ticket sales for the matches in Guyana have reportedly been slower than expected, with about 50% of the public tickets sold as of late August. By contrast, the ICC reported in early September that tickets had been sold out for Super 8 matches in Grenada and Barbados. Media reports have quoted the CWC West Indies 2007 Commercial Manager in Jamaica as saying that most ticket sales for the matches in Guyana have gone to members of the Guyanese diaspora in the U.S., UK, and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

14. (U) Matches will occur in the new US\$26 million Indian-financed and built Providence Stadium (capacity 15,000), located about 10 miles south of Georgetown. As of

early September, the LOC reported that construction was at 93% completion. The LOC has aimed for an October 31 completion date, in time for a final venue inspection by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in November.

SECURITY

15. (C) A four-man CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) team visited Guyana September 12-15 to meet with senior officials of the Guyana Police Force (GPF), Minister of Home Affairs Clement Rohee, CARICOM officials, and members of the LOC. Their findings are not encouraging. According to their report, "the Guyana Police security committee did not have a draft of any security plan and seemed a bit overwhelmed at all the security planning required for this event. It appeared that they were going to treat this as a common cricket match and had no idea of the magnitude of regional and national planning required for an event of this nature." The report recommends that CARICOM provide funds for security training and suggests that a UK-based firm may provide venue security training. The team also provided the GPF with a National Security Plan template, and the GPF pledged to return a draft security plan within 7 days.

ACCOMMODATION

16. (SBU) The IMPACS report also expresses concern about the lack of adequate secure accommodation in Georgetown. Most of Guyana's limited existing capacity has been devoted to

housing teams, officials and media (TOMS), leaving little room for spectators. Attention has centered on a hotel being constructed by reputed narco-money launderer Omprakash Shivraj next door to the cricket venue that will reportedly have 274 rooms. Construction appears to be running apace, though rumors swirl regarding financial difficulties that may jeopardize its completion (Reftel). As of late August 2006, Guyanese authorities reported capacity of 1,728 hotel rooms, including 676 still under construction.

17. (SBU) The potential use of cruise ships to provide additional accommodation continues to be bandied about but does not appear to be a serious option. New Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Manniram Prashad, a failed travel agent and former Investment Advisor to the President, told the Ambassador in a September 19 courtesy call that the GOG is still considering cruise ships. However, LOC Accommodations and Hospitality Coordinator Nikolas Oudkerk told EconOff the following day that no private investors have embraced the cruise ship idea and that it does not seem viable. Oudkerk said that a Florida-based firm, Hillborne Projects International, has agreed to provide 250 trailers that will house up to 6 people each in the National Park in Georgetown. This is a private initiative to be done on a cost recovery basis. The GOG has also announced a "bed and breakfast" scheme to encourage Guyanese to host visitors in their homes as well as a potential "tent city" to be constructed at a water park near Timehri Airport. As of late September, the "Bed and Breakfast Secretariat" had reportedly identified only 400 rooms against its target of 2,000.

TRANSPORTATION

18. (U) The venue's location along the road between Georgetown and Timehri Airport has raised concern about congestion on the only road into and out of the capital. The LOC has announced a "park and ride" arrangement whereby buses would transport spectators to the stadium from four parking areas in the Georgetown vicinity. This would allow only vehicles transporting TOMS and security personnel and emergency vehicles to access the road. Providing access to workers who

commute into and out of the capital has apparently not been considered.

¶9. (U) The IMPACS report found that Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Guyana's sole international airport, has "adequate space" in the arrival/departure lounge. However, the report expresses concern that the security checkpoint has only two lanes. The airlines' capacity to bring people into and out of the country is also a variable. Visitor arrivals for all of 2005 totaled just over 116,000 people, suggesting that CWC will require Guyana to absorb more than a quarter of its yearly visitor capacity in just two weeks. The impending restructuring of British West Indies Airways, one of three airlines to service Guyana, presents an additional variable.

LEGISLATION

¶10. (U) Also required for Guyana to host the games is passage of so-called "Sunset Legislation" that prohibits ambush marketing, establishes protections for ICC trademarks, and protects commercial rights for ICC concessionaires. Parliament did not address such legislation prior to its dissolution, making this a priority for the ninth parliament when it sits at the end of September.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) The Cricket World Cup will likely be an economic disappointment. President Jagdeo essentially brushed aside IMF and other donors' concerns in signing a US\$19 million soft loan payable in 2024 with the Government of India. India

supplemented this with a US\$6 million grant. The Government Information Agency reports that the GOG will spend as much as US\$3.5 million on urban beautification. Meanwhile, while some hoteliers have made modest improvements to their facilities, others seem reluctant to undertake costly upgrades for which the rate of return after the ten days of cricket are over is uncertain.

¶12. (C) Privately, several government and business contacts have expressed concern at Guyana's ability to manage the event. Regarding the potential influx of spectators, Attorney General Doodnauth Singh told the Ambassador that he hoped people would not come to the games, implying that Guyana was unprepared to accommodate outsiders. This sentiment is a useful commentary on the present situation. If, as preliminary ticket sales suggest, most of the visitors are overseas-based Guyanese who will stay with family and are accustomed to local conditions, then Guyana's lack of preparedness will not be as acute. However, the net economic benefit will also be reduced, especially if members of the diaspora return next March in lieu of annual or biannual travel during the holidays.

¶13. (SBU) Post understands that Guyana faces a November 8 deadline for inspection by the ICC. Speculation has been increasing that Guyana will lose the games should the ICC find preparation inadequate in November among various interlocutors. Cricket insiders cite Dominica, Trinidad and Jamaica as potential alternate venues, although the ICC confirmed on that Trinidad's unfinished Brian Lara stadium would no longer be a venue. The ICC's plan to allow visitors to the region to travel among host countries without a visa includes Dominica in the list of countries although it is not currently hosting any matches.
Robinson